UNITED NATIONS
ECONOMIC
AND
SOCIAL COUNCIL

E/CN.11/WRD/MKG/L.149 Rev.1
11 May 1965
ORIGINAL : ENGLISH

UNITED NATIONS

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR ASIA AND THE FAR EAST.

Committee for Coordination of Investigations
of the Lower Mekong Basin.
(Cambodia, Laos, Thailand and Republic of Viet-Nam)

28th Session (Special)
10 - 11 May 1965
Bangkok, Thailand

COMMUNIQUE

1. The Committee for Coordination of Investigations of the Lower Mekong Basin (Cambodia, Laos, Thailand and Republic of Viet-Nam), operating under the aegis of the United Nations Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East (ECAFE), today concluded in Bangkok a 2-day extraordinary session (28th Session - Special).

2. The meeting was called to consider, informally and without commitment, with Mr. C.V. Narasimhan, Chef de Cabinet of the Secretary-General of the United Nations and Under-Secretary for General Assembly Affairs, possible ways and means of augmenting the capability of the United Nations to implement projects sponsored by the Mekong Committee, and related matters such as construction of Asian Highway segments in Mekong riparian countries, and the possible relationship between the Committee and the proposed Asian Development Bank. U Nyun, Executive Secretary of ECAFE; Dr. C. Hart Schaaf, the Committee's Executive Agent; the Resident Representatives and Directors of Special Fund projects in the four Mekong riparian countries; the Committee's Advisory Board; and other key members of the Secretariat of United Nations Headquarters, of ECAFE, and of the Mekong Committee participated also in the meeting. In addition Mr. Thomas Niblock representing Mr. Eugene Black, and representatives of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, attended part of the session as observers.

/ 3. The Committee

3. The Committee noted that its rapidly growing work is involving it not only in numerous water resources development projects on the Mekong mainstream and on its tributaries (with five tributary projects already under construction), but also in many ancillary fields including industrial and agricultural development activities, and mineral surveys; and that development of the basin's water resources will require it to pay attention to and on occasion to supplement developmental activities in such fields as road and rail transport, public health, nutrition, education, and social affairs. The Committee feels that its terms of reference should be expanded to reflect the widening fields with which it is concerned, and that its title should be formally altered, in line with usage increasingly employed for the past several years, to some such title as "Committee for the Development of the Lower Mekong Basin", abbreviated as "Mekong Development Committee". The Committee instructed the Secretariat to prepare an amended draft statute along these lines for consideration by the Committee at its next session, and for submission for ratification to the four governments concerned. The amended statute is to retain the essential features of present Committee practice, in particular : concern with technical but not with political matters, no interest in assistance to which political conditions are attached, decision-making processes whereby no member of the Committee is ever asked to undertake or participate in any project not desired and approved by it, and determination to work for the benefit of all the people of the Lower Mekong Basin without distinction as to politics or nationality.

4. The Committee noted with keen satisfaction the increasing interest recently manifested in many quarters in augmenting the resources avail ble for the implementation of projects sponsored by it, as well as other related developmental projects in the four riparian countries.

/ The Committee

The Committee is highly appreciative of the some $68 million equivalent pledged todate for its activities by the four riparian governments themselves, 21 countries from outside the Basin, 12 UN agencies, and by a number of private foundations and businesses; however, the Committee is aware that its objectives and requirements for development are outstripping such resources already pledged, and notes with interest that substantial additional resources may be made available to the Secretary-General of the United Nations for its work.

5. The Committee listed a number of projects in water resources development and related fields which its four governments regard as vital to economic development, and in which considerable although varying amounts of pre-investment work have already been carried out. This list includes projects already accorded priority by the Mekong Committee to a total of some $71.5 million; the Pa Mong and Sambor mainstream projects on which investigations are now advanced and hopefully will within a few years be at the point where serious financial discussions can begin, in an amount of about $900 million; sectors within the Lower Mekong Basin of the proposed Asian Highway, in an initial amount of about $70 million rising to a total of some $300 million in later years; and numerous other water resources development and related projects. The Committee plans to sift and in some cases to add to this list of projects at its next session, in the light of its expanded terms of reference and after further consultations of the four Committee Members with their four Governments. Meanwhile provisional priorities have been established within the list.

6. Within the foregoing list, the Committee reiterated the top priority which it assigns to construction of the Nam Ngum tributary project in Laos. This project, at an estimated cost of some $27 million, will provide electric power for Vientiane and environs, as well as irrigation for the Vientiane Plain; in addition the project will be able to export a modest amount of electric power to the Northeast of Thailand, thereby having the dual advantage of providing a benefit for Thailand and simultaneously serving as an export earner for Laos; the Nam Ngum Project will mark the first point within the Mekong development programme in which electric power becomes an international

/ commodity

commodity moving across an international frontier and thus becoming part of the international Mekong network. Mr. Niblock conveyed to the meeting the desire of Mr. Eugene Black to encourage the Mekong Committee and the Governments concerned in the development of the basin, and Mr. Black's keen interest in learning the views of the countries of the region regarding the form and type of assistance best suited to the needs of the Mekong Project. With reference to Nam Ngum, Mr. Niblock expressed on behalf of Mr. Black the view that the United States would be prepared to make a commitment to grant half of the total cost of the first stage of the project, plus finance for expansion of electric power distribution facilities, provided the Mekong Committee and the Government of Laos obtain grants from other sources for the remaining half of the cost; and assuming that Laos and Thailand enter into satisfactory arrangements for the sale to Thailand of Nam Ngum power; and assuming that any remaining technical and economic problems are resolved including determination that an adequate market will exist for Nam Ngum power. The Mekong Committee expressed its deep appreciation to Mr. Black for his communication.

7. The Committee requested Mr. Narasimhan to transmit the list of projects referred to in Para. 5 to U Thant, Secretary-General of the United Nations; and the Committee indicated that it would be deeply pleased if the Secretary-General could find ways and means to assist in its implementation. Mr. Narasimhan conveyed to the Committee the warm good wishes of the Secretary-General and felt that the Secretary-General would wish to inform the Committee at its next session of progress in obtaining such resources.

8. The Committee decided to hold its 29th Session (Special) in Vientiane, Laos, Thursday and Friday 12/13 August 1965.